



Rocky Mountain Cat Conservancy
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NEWS RELEASE

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Rocky Mt. Cat Conservancy Partners With Students to Study Lions

ESTES PARK, CO – In a win-win partnership, the Rocky Mountain Cat Conservancy (RMCC) has teamed with local middle and high school students to study mountain lions in an effort to learn more about this important predator and how to keep it wild.

Communities, Cameras, and Conservation is an education program designed to provide students with the opportunity to gain field work experience recording lion tracks and other sign, and checking self-triggering cameras as part of this long-term research in Estes Park and along the Front Range.

“Students benefit from this program by supplementing their classroom work with real field experience, and our organization benefits by having them collect important data that provides clues to lion ecology and what these animals need to thrive in their mountainous habitat,” said Caroline Krumm, lion biologist and director of RMCC.

Communities, Cameras, and Conservation includes a group of Estes Park students who along with their science teachers Melinda Merrill and Rob Liebman are setting and are regularly checking cameras in key lion habitats along the perimeter of Rocky Mountain National Park. Students and researchers are already reaping the benefits. In the first week of operation the cameras captured two lion photos along with a coyote, fox, and other wildlife species.

“Providing students with the opportunity to learn about lions in their habitat can really make a difference in their school curriculum,” said Merrill. “The students are really excited to be a part of this study and feel they can help make a difference,” she said. RMCC’s researchers have been studying the elusive mountain lion in the park and the surrounding region for nearly four years.

The MacGregor Ranch is one of the main trapping locations with its prime lion habitat and proximity to the park. Since RMCC’s inception, MacGregor has been a key partner with the organization allowing researchers on the property to capture and radio collar lions. MacGregor

Ranch also encourages students to “become history keepers who appreciate and study history and who work to preserve the past for future generations.” The MacGregor research site helps put wildlife conservation in context with the natural history of the area. The high-tech cameras used for this study are combined with lures such as call boxes that emit animal sounds designed to attract lions to the camera. Once the animal passes in front of the camera, it is then triggered to take a picture. “Camera traps are important to our study because they establish presence of lions and can reveal information about resident cats, such as their size and features,” Krumm said. These data are helpful with gaining some information as to their numbers, territories and health, she added.

“We know more about grizzly bears and wolves than we do about mountain lions,” Krumm said. “Our research is designed to gain clues about this top predator and piece together information so the public and resource manage

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